

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

It also is anything but surprising coming from Sinclair. A few months ago Sinclair ordered its ABC affiliates not to air a Nightline tribute to American soldiers killed in Iraq, saying it was anti-war propaganda. After 9/11, the company demanded that their affiliates express allegiance to the Bush administration on the air. Sinclair also forces their stations to air – as part of their 'local' news – ultra-conservative commentary from Sinclair's chief lobbyist and vice president for corporate relations, Mark Hyman, who is based in the company's Baltimore headquarters.

I do not think the anti-Kerry film should qualify for a news exemption under FCC rules, and I believe Sinclair's decision to order local affiliates like WMSN-TV 47 here in Madison, Wisconsin to air the film amounts to a violation of fairness rules.

The FCC should take action against Sinclair in this case. At the very least, Sinclair stations forced to air "Stolen Honor" should be required to air a pro-Kerry program like "Going Upriver" shortly after.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for their bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" in Baltimore, I want to see real people from my own community covering substantive news about issues that matter to me.

Thank you for your attention to my concerns.

Mike McCabe  
Madison, Wisconsin